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ABSTRACT

The influence of John Dewey's educational theory on curriculum development in South Africa is examined in this paper. The two main streams of thinking about curriculum theory in South Africa include the traditional perspective, which is heavily influenced by the national Christianity movement, and the alternative curriculum development perspective. A conclusion is that John Dewey influenced the two perspectives of curriculum theory in South Africa; however, the traditional field has widely criticized its humanistic and pragmatic orientation. The alternative field has widely accepted Dewey's focus on integrating students' social needs with the curriculum and on using curriculum as an instrument for social change. This view is also congruent with the educational goals of the African National Congress (ANC). At a stage when social and educational problems in the republic are addressed by diverse groups, Deweyan theory might provide some answers and certainly some obstacles. (Contains 39 references.) (LMI)

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THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN DEWEY ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum development as a discipline in Education, is difficult to study if not considered within the context of general provision of education. It is accepted that curriculum thinking is steered by theories which form the basis of educational thinking in general. The contextual, though, has a wider scope. Since no two countries have the same system for the provision of education, curriculum development should be regarded as an activity executed to achieve the objectives presented in the teaching policy. It is also true, however, that certain theories were formulated that influenced theory forming in Education in general, and curriculum development in particular.

Morris & Hamm (1976: 300) attempt to indicate in light vein the relevance as follows:

"Curriculum theory leads to learning theory which leads to instructional theory which leads to curriculum development which leads to the classroom which leads to Johnny Jones whom this is all about."

The term "theory" is often used in a sense that narrows it to becoming a tiresome prerequisite for "practice". Furthermore, theory is seen as the antipole for practice; a sort of speculation. Barrow (1984: 13) believes that the blame for failure in practice is usually attributed to the theory on which it is based. Theory which clearly cannot result in successful practice is put down as "mere theory". But in fact only "poor" or "good" theory exists.

The report of the working-committee: Curriculum development of the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council) investigation into education in South Africa (1981) lays particular emphasis on a curriculum theory. It is given as the first principle that all decision-making regarding curriculum should be based on a solid theory (p.133). Furthermore it is regarded as one of the functions of the suggested curriculum service to develop a theoretical basis for curriculum development (p.137). The first finding reported to the Head Committee by this working committee indicates that presently (1981) not much attention is given to the theory and practice of curriculum development (p.169). The formulation of such a theory is related to the determinants and principles of curriculum development (p.46). It may be assumed that these determinants and principles are the two pillars supporting a curriculum-theory. The determinants (e.g. manpower requirements, the demand for education, the learner) and principles (situation-analysis, objectives, learning experiences, learning content, learning opportunities and evaluation) are certainly important to consider when cognizance has to be taken of theory-forming, but one needs a broader theoretical basis for an efficient curriculum development-practice. Formulated theories in the field of curriculum development have points of departure from the fields of phenomenology, religion and the experimental, the traditional and so forth. Points of departure or fundamental bases can seldom be seen or described in isolation. However, certain paradigms (or lines of thought) can be identified in the field of curriculum theory. William H. Schubert is amongst others one of the curriculum experts who did valuable research on the role of paradigms in curriculum development.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT DESCRIPTIONS

The question was already asked in 1860 by Herbert Spencer: "What knowledge is of most worth?" (Pratt, 1980: 22). He asks that the relative value of specific fields of knowledge be determined before they become part of a curriculum. Spencer, as one of the first users of the term "curriculum", asks for a classification of all subjects, arranged according to hierarchy, aimed at:

- * survival
- * economic viability
- * preparation for future parenthood
- * drilling of skills towards maintaining the individual on social and political fields
- * recreation and the arts

Spencer's question was a condensed curriculum theoretical/curriculum philosophic formulation of a problem with which curriculum experts are struggling even today.

Inevitably any curriculum theory will be argued from the point of view of a certain paradigm in the search for the creation of a curriculum theory which is relevant to the curriculum practice, and which will satisfy the requirements of educational teaching. To quote but a single example, John Dewey, drew on a paradigm which was heavily social-political in nature, in his answer to the question on which knowledge is essential for a child to learn. Possibly his most important verdict on curriculum theory (see also Spencer), is:

"... there is no such thing as genuine knowledge and fruitful understanding except as the offspring of doing". (In: D'Urso, 1980: 29).

It may be concluded that Dewey wants to see the child learning through experience (especially of existing social and political structures) and that education should then be attuned to interpreting and, preferably adjusting these structures (see Dewey, J: *Democracy and Education as a whole*).

It is suspected that John Dewey is one of the most important providers of a paradigm in the curriculum theory. This was confirmed, i.e., in an investigation conducted by Shane (1981:311) in which the opinions of 84 members of the "Professors of Curriculum" group in the U.S.A. were asked. They had to draw up a list ranking the curriculum-works which in their opinion had the greatest impact. An analysis of this indicated that Tyler's Basic principles of curriculum and instruction§ and Dewey's *Democracy and Education* are regarded as the most prominent works.

The paradigmatic continuum, Tyler in a certain sense a follower of Dewey, is confirmed through the findings of i.e. Baruch & Callaway (1984: 4/5) who believe that Tyler's rational

"... is predicated on the ideas of others in the field including the Herbartians, John Dewey, Harold Rugg etc...".

Viewed theoretically the study of curriculum development in the RSA may be regarded as a relatively new field. The HSRC-investigation into education (1981) established i.e. that to a large extent curriculum writers are still ignorant in regard to the theory and practice of curriculum development.

Paradigms determine the principle upon which curriculum development is based as well as eventually the practice of curriculum development. The identification and verification of leading paradigms (models/ frames of reference) can therefore serve as guidelines for the structuring of curriculum development-practice.

University textbooks by which curriculum experts in the RSA are trained as well as published articles on the field of curriculum portray a strong influence of John Dewey. Dewey has been called the provider of the leading paradigms for the formation of curriculum-theory.

Research done by W.H. Schubert in the field of paradigms has already resulted in a publication by him and a presentation at the congress of the American Educational Research Association in 1987, entitled: "A genealogy of curriculum researchers", in which he stresses the influence of schools and tendencies in the curriculum field in the USA.

Within the South African context a study of the influence of different paradigms is considered relevant for various reasons. Interaction does not exist to the same extent between the academics and practice in the field of curriculum development in the RSA as it does in the USA. The danger arises that the existing paradigms regarding curriculum development are used unconditionally by some as foundation for the practice of curriculum development.

This study is also significant in the South African context because the contents of certain prescribed subject curricula in South African schools has been queried. These queries were made on the basis of certain fundamental questions that contained ideological undertones. The so-called "People's Education" movement and the demand for a more objective history-recording, serve as examples of the practical realization of certain paradigms. As objective for this paper a certain logical relationship is therefore assumed among the following elements: a paradigm (frame of reference), a curriculum theory and the practice of curriculum development.

Based on the attempts towards definition of paradigm by Page and Thomas (1977: 258); Kuhn (1973: viii); Rowntree (1981: 207); Schubert (1986: 10); Mouton (1979: 38); we may deduce that the term may especially be interpreted in two ways.

The first relates especially to the view of Kuhn (1973: viii):

"These I take to be universally recognized scientific achievement that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners".

In other words, a paradigm is seen as the space within which a scientist works. His use and interpretation of previous scientific labour in the same field of knowledge then guide his own thinking. Kuhn (1973: 10) remarks, however, that such previous scientific labour, acknowledged as paradigms, satisfies two conditions, viz. that its impetus is such that it draws a large number of "followers" and secondly that its structure is open to such an extent that there are sufficient problems arising from it drawing the attention of scientists towards their solution.

The second interpretation of the term indicates an ideological framework. Schubert (1986: 12) sees ideology within curriculum context as a general term relating to the political, economic, psychological and cultural character of the

curriculum. According to him curriculum writers analyse, interpret and evaluate the quality of knowledge inside the curriculum within this "ideological paradigm".

A scientist's view of the "evolution" of scientific thinking within his field of study undoubtedly influences his own scientific thinking. This paradigm therefore steers his scientific activity. However, to regard this as the most important influence, or the only "model" that he uses (see Kuhn), is an oversimplification or disregard of the individuality of man.

A paradigm may therefore be defined as the space within which scientific labour occurs, on condition that the space be constituted by not only the scientist's approach towards reality, man, knowledge and community, but also his interpretation and evaluation of the evolution of knowledge within his specific field of scientific labour. It is within this framework that the influence of Dewey in South Africa can be evaluated.

3. SURVEY OF CERTAIN BASIC POINTS OF DEPARTURE HELD BY DEWEY

In a similar question to that of Spencer, Dewey states that school subjects are accepted as essential on traditional grounds, but that the value thereof is never doubted. He believes that the name of a subject doesn't disclose anything of the subject itself, nor its method nor the aim of the presentation. (Dewey, 1931: 5). An important judgement regarding the role of the teacher is made when he says that the teacher holds an implicit and possibly subconscious education philosophy which guides him in the teaching of his subject. The source of this education philosophy he sees in the mentor of the teacher as student (Dewey, 1931: 6). This "mentor" idea links up with Schubert's view of the influence of the teacher on the student as mentioned previously. Dewey (1931: 6) makes the interesting statement that only the subject Mathematics is free from the influence of the teacher and his premises, based on study and mentor.

In a study on the influence of Dewey one is often inhibited by the apparent absence of a foundation based on religious and life-view considerations. In that sense Dewey laid the groundwork for the pragmatic *modus operandi* which guided curriculum development in particular and education in general in the USA.

Dewey believes that it is difficult to develop syllabi for the secondary school in such a way that the so-called "practical" or vocationally-directed subjects still retain a scientific basis (Dewey, 1931: 28). One must remember that this was said in an age when much was written on the value of school subjects having a traditional (or theoretical) basis.

The element of problem-solving during the presentation of school subjects, as well as the simultaneous activity-principle, is important to Dewey. The combination of these two principles in his view will lead to the school subject having a lasting influence on the pupil's life later on. He pleads for the application of these principles in the so-called theoretical subjects as well.

3.1 Social context

Changes in the community cause changes in subject-curricula. Dewey, however, sees a problem in the integration of the so-called practical subjects in the existing curricula of his time. A development which had his support were

the attempts to have social studies taught as a school subject. (Boydston, 1976: 294).

A later finding of Dewey explains very well this appeal of his to reconcile the social life with school subjects. Here he specifically says that all information and subject-ordinations for teaching purposes are the result of activities which endeavour to integrate the social with the curriculum. He regards the improvement of the existing community-life towards creating a better future, as one of the most important criteria which the curriculum compiler has to bear in mind (Boydston, 1980: 198-199).

A school is seen as a channel through which the successes of the community are transferred to the next generation so that further development and improvement may take place. (Dewey, 1915: 7). According to Dewey (1915: 27) a large section of his generation only recognise the value of "basic" subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic which enable them to maintain themselves in the community.

It seems as if Dewey often experiences a measure of inner conflict when he describes the social in relation to the subject-curricula. He regards the subject curricula on the one hand as the road along which social change must be propagated, but on the other hand the purpose of curriculum composition is a reflection of the status quo in the community. This is a universal problem and it may be assumed that the way in which Dewey described it, had an influence on several of the "movements" (like the "Progressive Movement") in later years in the USA. The application of subject-curricula to propagate changes in the community rather than describing the existing customs in the community is not unknown within the South African context either. The Peoples' Education movement supports the principle of restructuring existing subject-curricula as well as the addition of new subject-curricula in order to achieve goals with education corresponding to the proponents' view of a new community.

3.2 Values and norms

We find an absence of a religious basis in the education philosophy with Dewey. His approach to the separation of science and faith may possibly best be seen in an argument recorded in a presentation that was published in 1924 (Boydston, 1976). He describes the "struggle" that many scientists had in deciding between dogma and science and to reconcile the results of scientific research with their religious convictions. He then delivers the verdict: "... science has won its freedom."

Dewey's philosophy regarding education is possibly the best expounded in his work "The sources of a science of Education" (1929), in which he elaborates on his view of the concrete experience as the source of all knowledge.

Rather than considering curriculum development as an attempt to arrange valuable contents, Dewey considers subject-curricula as mentioned above, as a product of the social character of the community. The curriculum as such has value if it succeeds in allowing the pupil to experience. Games and activity are, therefore, so important. For him, the value-element is significant between the curriculum and the learner and not as a condition for the selection and arrangement of learning-content. A lot of attention has been given to this matter in the South African curriculum literature too.

4. THE INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE OF DEWEY

It is well known that Dewey had an influence internationally on education and curriculum thinking as he did in China, Japan and Siberia (to mention just a few) through his visits and judgement of the political and social conditions. Dewey's deep concern for the influence of racial prejudice in the community and education in particular is expressed in a presentation before the Chinese Social and Political Science Association in 1922 (Boydston, 1988: 242-254).

Arndt (1929) believes that Dewey's influence may especially be seen in England, Germany and Holland. It is especially his "philosophy" that influences writings. Mention is also made of a report presented to the Turkish government by Dewey regarding the reorganization of their school-system.

5. THE TWO MAIN STREAMS OF THINKING ON CURRICULUM THEORY IN THE RSA

THE TRADITIONAL LINE OF THINKING

It is in a South African context necessary that the view which J. Chris Coetzee had regarding Dewey, be studied closely. Coetzee is widely regarded as the founder of the first main stream, viz. Christian-National education. Coetzee (1964) believes that Dewey is a radical socialistic educationalist. He believes that the reason why Dewey's life view is "experimental" in nature, is because Dewey doesn't adhere to absolute truths but takes changing social organization as his point of departure. Coetzee recognizes in Dewey's views a threat that would break down formative subjects, as well as teaching methods, discipline and culture-conception. Coetzee describes Dewey as a pure naturalist since he recognizes no evil in the nature (of the child). He also criticizes Dewey's approach to punishment sharply and comes to the conclusion that Dewey's refusal to distinguish between the social, moral and religious aspects implies dangerous Socialism, which is in direct conflict with the Christian approach in the RSA.

Eymann (1952: 174) agrees with the above view when he says that Dewey takes a stand against all traditional forms of the Christian belief and develops his own metaphysical theory along naturalistic lines.

The influence that Coetzee had on education and curriculum development in the RSA probably emerges the most clearly from the fact that largely through Coetzee's influence a bill was passed in 1967 determining that all education in South Africa would have a Christian and national character and take into consideration the religious convictions of non-Christians. Seen against this background the work of curriculum experts such as Maree, Hill, Kruger and Steyn in the first line of thinking (the traditional line) should be judged.

The fact that the curriculum science as sub-discipline of education is a relatively new field in the RSA, is apparent from the fact that the work of Maree appeared as late as 1970. It must be stated clearly that the works of the identified writers were consulted as they were considered to have contributed towards the development of the field of curriculum theoretical thinking. No intensive investigation was done as to the mutual influence of these writers. However, certain aspects that emerged, are the following:

- * The above mentioned four writers have as point of departure a strong theoretical basis in their arguments. Definition forming, identification of

the essence and explanation and prediction form an integral part of their "fundamental" works.

- * There is a strong correspondence between the curriculum theoretical thinking of these persons. The paradigm which is the basis of argument differs on the surface but essentially the differences aren't fundamental. (This superficial difference especially applies to the works of Maree, Hill and Kruger on the one hand and Steyn on the other.)
- * The writers took thorough cognisance of one another. Mutual cross-reference as well as criticism of arguments occurs continuously.

In 1970 P.J. Maree completed his thesis, entitled:

"n Wesenskou van die leerinhoud van die pedagogiese situasie as didaktiese situasie". (A portrayal of the essence of the learning-content of the pedagogical situation as didactical situation).

The crux of this work is the provision of a categorial structure of the learning-content. The focus therefore is on learning content. Maree sees learning content within the pedagogical situation then as existence-relationships which are imprinted by the adult on the child's field of intentionality, and which the child must constitute into his own existence-relationships (1970: 93). The suitability or not of this learning-content is determined by the world and life view of the adult which means that the person of the educator is inextricably present in the learning-content (1970: 94/95). The essential relationship between learning-content and curriculum Maree describes as follows:

"Where the learning-content is referred to as life-content and school as intermediate experience-world of the child is typified to aim at a proper and adult existence, the justification of these *modi vivendi* are based upon the curriculum" (the responsible road towards adulthood) (1970: 228).

According to Maree a curriculum theory should be aimed at the design of criteria for the selection and implementation of sample sections from the world of existence (1970: 241). These sample sections can certainly be regarded as synonymous to valuable contents. Such representative samples, however, when selected from the world of existence display the nature and character of this world.

As such these approaches of Maree are not in direct contrast to those of Dewey as far as the role of content as experience is concerned (Dewey, 1902).

Within a religious and life-view variety as exists in the RSA, the question thus arises whether one shouldn't speak of contextual formulation of curriculum theories. Maree (1970: 253) asks that valid criteria for the selection of learning-contents should be drawn up in view of education-objectives which are the result of a specific life and world view. The own nature of the education events and the personal and social position of the child are identified as aspects, though, that should be noted. Maree's fundamental point of departure thus remains the objective with education. This objective is found in the life and world view of the teacher and curriculum writer. The religious undertone (in reaction to the neutral curriculum of Dewey) is clearly visible. Kliebard (1987) interprets Dewey's education target as the development of that kind of intelligence which will enable the child to take over control of his own life and eventually lead to social progress.

Without working eclectically an attempt was made to grasp the value/contribution that Maree's view has on the development course of curriculum theoretical thinking in the RSA. Maree starts from learning-content, but places it within a target perspective. Selected learning-content is then the result of formulated objectives. This relationship is also described by Hill, Kruger and Steyn.

Hill's thesis:

"Kriteria vir die seleksie en ordening van kurrikuluminhoud" (Criteria for the selection and arrangement of curriculum content)

is regarded as the second basic work towards curriculum theorising in the RSA.

Hill (1975: 17) sees the curriculum as a scientifically justifiable designed document. This document though, according to him, has a dual nature, viz. that it contains content (selected, ordered and evaluated) as well as didactical considerations. Both the content and didactical considerations should, however, be instrumental towards the fulfilment of set objectives.

Seen from a philosophic-anthropological perspective, containing aspects of the existence-philosophy, the image of man is described as prevailing, spoken and bespoken (1975: 31).

Hill emphasises the following associations/connections:

Curriculum and culture:

Curriculum-contents represent a specific community's selection from its partly acquired, partly adopted and partly improved and refined culture content. Teaching objectives as acquired from a view on life and mankind determine the nature of this selected content (Hill, 1975: 77).

This line of argument is typical of both Hill and Maree, Kruger and Steyn. Such a view must be accounted for from a macro-perspective inside any "curriculum theory for the RSA" (as put forward by the HSRC-report.).

Curriculum and knowledge:

In connection to the relationship between culture and curriculum, knowledge is now seen as symbolized culture. A discipline-guided approach to subjects is proposed as the most suitable form of classification of knowledge for efficient education (Hill, 1975: 105).

Hill seemingly accepts Dewey's view that the pupil should be led by the subject content towards experiencing the wider world. He points out though that the curriculum should also have a discipline-character - an aspect he finds lacking with Dewey. This view of Maree regarding Dewey corresponds to the importance given to discipline in school in the traditional line of thinking.

Kruger's point of departure (1980) in his arguments derives from the existence-philosophy while the phenomenological *modus operandi* is used to penetrate to the essence of the curriculum development events.

Kruger pleads for a "fundamental curriculum theory with sufficient flexibility for distinctive local circumstances", and points out the dangers of child centricism,

community centricism and subject centricism resulting from the absence of a balanced curriculum theory (1980:6).

Curriculum design is advocated by analogy of certain "principles and criteria".

These principles are situation analysis, objectives, learning contents, learning experience, learning opportunity and evaluation (Kruger, 1980: 32).

These principles can (rather?) be called stages in curriculum design. Certain criteria identified by Kruger amongst which viability (p. 123) and an acceptable propedeutic destination (p. 131), are essential building-blocks in erecting an encompassing curriculum theory. The viewpoint of Kruger regarding a propedeutic destination must also be seen as a statement reflecting a Christian view on the curriculum - not reconcilable with the view of Dewey as mentioned previously.

Kruger sees the relationship between culture and curriculum in this sense that the curriculum is "culture in action" since the community makes its culture available to its learners as living actiological contents through the curriculum (p.123).

From the cognition-command of God to man, an encyclopedic totality of knowledge regarding God, the law, creation and the mutual cohesion originated. The task of the curriculum writer is now according to Steyn (1984: 19) to classify this knowledge.

The view that a curriculum is the totality of knowledge which has to be mastered by (a) learner(s) on the way to reaching predetermined objectives (p.19), the curriculum theory is referred to as the integrated unity of cohesive viewpoints on the totality of knowledge, the learner and objectives to be achieved (p.23).

The perspectives which according to Steyn should form the basis of providing for a curriculum theory are the ontological, anthropological, knowledge-theoretical and community-theoretical (p.30). Steyn (1984: 38) makes mention of the fact that curriculum development in the United States is "inspired by humanists". Furthermore he acknowledges the fact that Dewey holds a certain "moral" view on the curriculum with regard to general norms and values.

An important source for the determination of knowledge and skills which should be included in the curriculum, is the family home and other secondary educational milieux.

As regards the relationship between culture and curriculum, Steyn sees it as an interwoven unity. The curriculum is the product of that which is valuable in a community.

LINE OF THINKING: ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

During 1988 the WCOTP-ATASA series of seminars on alternative curriculum development was presented in order to assemble the leading thinkers on alternative curriculum development in the RSA. ATASA sees its task as the systematic curriculum development for alternative education in South Africa

From the published conference proceedings of the above-mentioned conference it is clear that a lot of attention is given to a study of the historical course of the provision of education in general and curriculum development in particular in the RSA. Regarding the HSRC report mentioned previously

(considered an important landmark whatever the line of thinking), it is seen by Njoloza (1988: 6) as a document in which the necessity for change in South Africa is recognized. The implication of this is that the HSRC report is seen to pave the way for alternative curriculum development in the RSA.

Within the radical paradigm rooted in the principle that the community has to change continuously, that there is constant conflict and that change must be drastic (Njoloza, 1988: 9), curriculum development is seen as one of the cornerstones to effect this change.

Sibisi (1988: 15) distinguishes two clear phases in the historical development of the school curriculum in the RSA. The first phase was from 1652-1948 and is called the pre-colonial phase. The second phase is from 1948 till the present and is the colonial phase. The inextricable relationship between political development and political change on the one hand and the method of curriculum development on the other hand is characteristic of the arguments within this line of thinking.

System-problems are pointed out by Sam and Gasa (1988: 105) as one of the serious impediments in the creation of a school curriculum which is acceptable to all. The point of view is that the curriculum should be "passed along" to the final user (the teacher). The teacher, however, has no say in the development of such a curriculum. The blame is sought in the fact that the "system" is not in the hands of "the people" (Sam and Gasa, 1988: 113). Curriculum development, thus, is the result of the work of education departments. As part of the solution Sam and Gasa (1988: 114) envisage the creation of labour unions for teachers since organized teacher involvement may only be acquired through mass-participation. Pressure for changes in existing curricula may be effected in this way.

It is important, though, in the above-mentioned context, to scrutinize the view of the African National Congress (ANC) with regard to education too. In the well-known "Freedom Charter" of this movement the goal of education is "to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace". The all-embracing political goal of the ANC, viz. a complete democratic structure with certain socialistic elements will probably be reflected in the education. Dewey's view (1938) that "the democratic social arrangement promote a better quality of human experience" coincides completely with the above mentioned integrated democratic-social ideal of the ANC.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- * John Dewey had an influence on curriculum development in South Africa. This influence can be seen in the theories of both the two contrasting lines of thought in the field of curriculum theory.
- * In the traditional field (e.g. Christian National Education) the humanistic and pragmatic approach of Dewey is widely criticized. Resistance to the views held by Dewey with regard to the social aspect as well as the absence of a religious foundation within Deweyan thought is widely found.
- * In the alternative field Dewey's view on the integration of the social needs of the pupils with the curriculum is widely accepted. The pragmatic approach of Dewey is combined with the view that the school curriculum is one of the main instruments for social change.

- * At a stage where societal and educational problems in South Africa are being addressed by a wide variety of groups, Dewey might provide some answers, but will certainly create some obstacles.

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